

Thumbs down on legal pot

Marijuana ballot initiative gets a no from Duxbury selectmen

By Mary McKenzie
Clipper Reporter

With the concerns of citizens and community leaders, including Police Chief Matthew Clancy at Town Hall Monday night, the Duxbury Board of Selectmen voiced unanimous disapproval of the marijuana legalization initiative up for Massachusetts to vote on this fall.

The selectmen voted to write a letter to Governor Charlie Baker immediately after the meeting to voice their concerns about the ballot question.

The initiative, ballot question No. 4, would allow anyone 21 or over to purchase marijuana in the state of Massachusetts, also opening up the marketplace to edibles and other products (ointments, oils, drinkables, etc.). If it is passed, the initiative means people could keep up to ten ounces of pot in their home and one ounce on their person. Medical dispensaries would be able to first apply for licenses for retail sales in October 2017 and all other interested businesses would have to wait until January 2018. No facilities would be allowed within 500 feet of a school.

The idea behind the ballot is “to remove the production and distribution of marijuana from the illicit market and to prevent the sale of marijuana to persons under 21 years of age by providing for a regulated and taxed distribution system.”

Anne Ward, who is chairman of the Duxbury School Committee, said she was concerned that treating marijuana like alcohol would lead to a lot more kids smoking pot at younger ages due to “the proliferation of fake IDs.”

“My main concern is underage use, and with the proliferation of fake IDs out there, it will be too easy,” she said.

Police Chief Clancy told the board he sees the initiative as a denial of the drug problems faced around Duxbury and across the state.

“It is my opinion as a police officer and father that this proposal at this point in time, defies any common sense,” Clancy told the selectmen. “People are losing their battles with addiction every day in our area. The opioid crisis is real. Communities and families are struggling to get a handle on this epidemic.”

Clancy said he is concerned that police and community groups are overtaxed now, using “extraordinary measures to stabilize the current situation.”

“It doesn’t appear to me that there is any common sense in a proposal that seeks to legalize a gateway drug, particularly now with the ongoing crisis of substance abuse,” Clancy said. “As your police chief and as the father of four children, I urge you all to reject this ballot question.”

These concerns were heard by the board, who quickly came to the conclusion that they agreed.

“It is really unfortunate that we would be considering another distraction, another crutch, when we are having so much trouble dealing with what is going on right now,” said Selectman Ted Flynn. “Why add to the problem?”

Selectman Shawn Dahlen said he recognized that “everything depends on the person. There are people that can have one or two drinks and be reasonable and leave it at that, and there are those who cannot stop there. For people with addictive-type personalities, this (legalization of marijuana) may well be one more bullet to put into the gun.”

Selectman David Madigan questioned the financial benefits of legalization, which has long been touted as a method to greatly increase taxable businesses for communities and states, i.e., the rush of funds into the state of Colorado after legalization there.

“My understanding is that when they first legalized marijuana in Colorado, there was tremendous income, but now rising law enforcement costs and all the social problems that are stemming from this increased flow of drugs is effectively negating that increase (in tax dollars from marijuana shops and businesses), because the money is going back out,” said Madigan. “In the end, they are no better off financially either.”

In other news:

- The Route 53 roundabout curbing should be done this week and the raised berm will be landscaped shortly. Town Manager Rene Read said the raised center is designed to decrease glare.
- New residents or new voters should register at the Town Clerk Office by August 19 for the September 8 state primary elections. On the 19th, the clerk’s office will remain open until 8 p.m. for those who need to register.
- Next meeting scheduled for the Board of Selectmen is Monday, August 22.